



United States Mission to the OSCE

US Released Country Reports on Human Rights

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 8, 2007

Mr. Chairman.

Tuesday in Washington, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice announced the publication of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006. These congressionally mandated annual reports speak to my country's continued support for those fundamental freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In releasing the report, Secretary Rice stated:

‘We do not issue these reports because we think ourselves perfect, but rather because we know ourselves to be deeply imperfect, like all human beings and the endeavors that they make. Our democratic system of governance is accountable, but it is not infallible. We are nonetheless guided by enduring ideals: the inalienable rights of humankind and the principles of democracy toward which all people and all governments must continue striving. And that includes us here in America.’

These reports are global in nature, and discuss a broad range of key human rights criteria. But if we look at the OSCE region in particular, they document extensive progress in the last generation towards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. But this year's report also highlights that in a number of countries the record remains poor or has regressed. More importantly, I think, this year's report, highlights a disturbing trend within our OSCE region. As the push for greater personal and political freedom has grown stronger in our participating States, it is being met with increasing resistance from those who feel threatened by political and societal change.

Human rights defenders and nongovernmental organizations, who are so essential to a nation's success, are under pressure.

In too many countries in the OSCE region, governments have responded to the growing demands for personal and political freedom not by accepting their obligations to the people but by oppressing those who advocated for human rights and who exposed abuses, such as nongovernmental organizations and independent media. A disturbing number of countries passed or selectively applied laws and regulations against NGOs and journalists. NGOs and journalists were also subjected to extralegal measures. In our view, that underscores the

importance of returning to the discussions that we had before the Brussels ministerial on human rights defenders and to make this a priority during our work during this year.

We hope that these reports will be a source of information and accountability for governments and societies everywhere. We will circulate a statement over the delegates' network that will provide all of you with the website on which these country reports can be found:

www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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